

## [May Lee Queen]

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Words 1260

### PIONEER STORY [May Lee Queen?]

My father, Captain John Lee, was born November 27, 1835 in Edinburgh Scotland. His parents came to the United States when he was eighteen months old and lived in Moodus; Connecticut. When he was fourteen years old, he ran away to sea. He followed the sea for many years and came to own his own sailing vessel. He traded extensively in the South Seas and dealt mostly in copra. He went around the world three times in a sailing vessel, and discovered a small island that was called Lee's Island. When I was a small girl in school at White Oaks, New Mexico this island was shown on the maps of my geography.

My father married Mary Purcell, who was a daughter of an English missionary of the Church of England, and a graduate of Oxford. My mother was the granddaughter of King Mata Afa, who was king of the island of Samoa. My father and mother were married at Apia Samoa. They owned a plantation near Apia and lived there for several years. They had nine children born on this island.

Father decided that he wanted his children educated in the United States, so they left Apia, Samoa on a sailing vessel for the States. They were six months on the sea. They ran into "calms" and were delayed for days and weeks. Their water and food supplies ran short and they were put on short rations. Just before the food was entirely gone they made the port of Honolulu and the vessel was restocked. They landed at San Francisco about the year 1879.

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After visiting my father's family in Connecticut and traveling around a good bit they decided to settle in Richmond, Virginia. Father bought a farm near Richmond and lived there for about a year and a half. Mother and the children had chills and fever and were sick so much that they decided to move.

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Father had always wanted a cattle ranch, so they moved down to southwest Texas and bought a cattle ranch about twenty miles from Brackettsville, Texas. The family came by train from Virginia to Texas and had been there only a short time when I was born on June 1st, 1882. About two years later my mother had another baby girl, and she and I were the only children born in the United States. While we were living there Father met a man named McBee who had a ranch at White Oaks, New Mexico. He was always telling Father what a great country New Mexico was, so in 1886 my father sold out his place near Brackettsville and started for New Mexico.

Our family consisted of Father, Mother and the eleven children. My two oldest brothers and my oldest sister were married, so they and their families came with us to New Mexico. We were in five covered wagons drawn by horses. Father had about 200 head of cattle and about 60 horses. The boys drove the stock and the ladies did the cooking. I was about four years old at the time but one or two incidents stand out very clearly in my memory. We were very much afraid of the Indians as we had heard of the terrible things that they had done to wagon trains. We were not molested by them at all, tho" we saw them on several occasions.

I remember waking up one morning and hearing my mother crying. I looked out and it seemed to me that I saw piles and piles of dead stock all around us. The cattle and horses had died from drinking the alkali water. This happened where Seven Rivers emptied into the Pecos River. My father was very much discouraged and took what was left of the cattle and horses and went up an the [Penasco?] in New Mexico. He bought a farm and we lived there for about a year. We raised lots of potatoes that year and the boys sold them.

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Father decided to go on to White Oaks, New Mexico, to where the McBee's lived so he sold out the farm and what cattle he had left and we moved to White Oaks. My married brothers 3 and my married sister and their families moved back to Texas. We went to the MeBee ranch which was about two miles from White Oaks. We lived on this ranch a year and Father ran a dairy and sold the milk in White Oaks. At the end of the year Father got us a house nearer town, just above the Old Abe Mine pump station. He opened up a meat shop in town. We children went to school and I remember one teacher especially, named Wharton. The geographys that we studied showed Lee's Island on the map and the teacher often told the class that it was our father who had discovered this island. [?]

My brother Bob married and worked in the South Homestake Mine. He drilled into a "dud" (a percussion cap that had not been exploded) and it blew up and killed him. This was about 1892. There was such a big family of us and all the married ones settled around my father and they called our place Leesville. There were about five families of us. Father used to drive the stage to Socorro. I remember once that he did not get home when the stage was due and my mother got very uneasy. The stage was often held up and we were afraid it had been held up and my father killed. He was a night and day late and just about the time my brothers and some friends got their horses saddled to go look for him we saw the stage coming over the hill into White Oaks. They had run into a terrible snow storm and the horses could not pull the stage thro'ugh the storm. It was very cold and my father and the passengers were almost frozen. He stopped the stage at our house and the passengers came in and got warmed up and drank some coffee before Father took the stage an into the town. Father wore a beard and I remember that it was all covered with ice and snow and you could only see his eyes. I grew up with Edward L. Queen in White Oaks and we were married in the Metho'dist Church there on January 1st, 1902, by the Reverend Sam Allison, who now lives in El Paso, Texas.

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We have three children, two boys and one girl, all married, and one grandson and one grand-daughter, who all now live in California. Of my father's family there are only three

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left, myself, one brother, Jim Lee, who lives in Douglas, Arizona and one sister Mrs. Ray Lemon, who lives in Carrizozo. My father died in Douglas, Arizona in 1920, at the age of eighty-five years. My mother died in Carrizozo at eighty-one years, in 1925.

Mr. Queen and I leave White Oaks some times for years at a time but we always come back. We have our home here. Judge Andrew R. Hudepeth, who owned the property in White Oaks known as Leesville, made me a gift of a deed to this property in 1936. I am very glad to own our old home.

NARRATOR: May Lee Queen, White Oaks, New Mexico, Aged 56 years.